AMAR CHITRA KATHA

BANDA BAHADUR

A VALIANT SIKH WARRIOR

Vol 734

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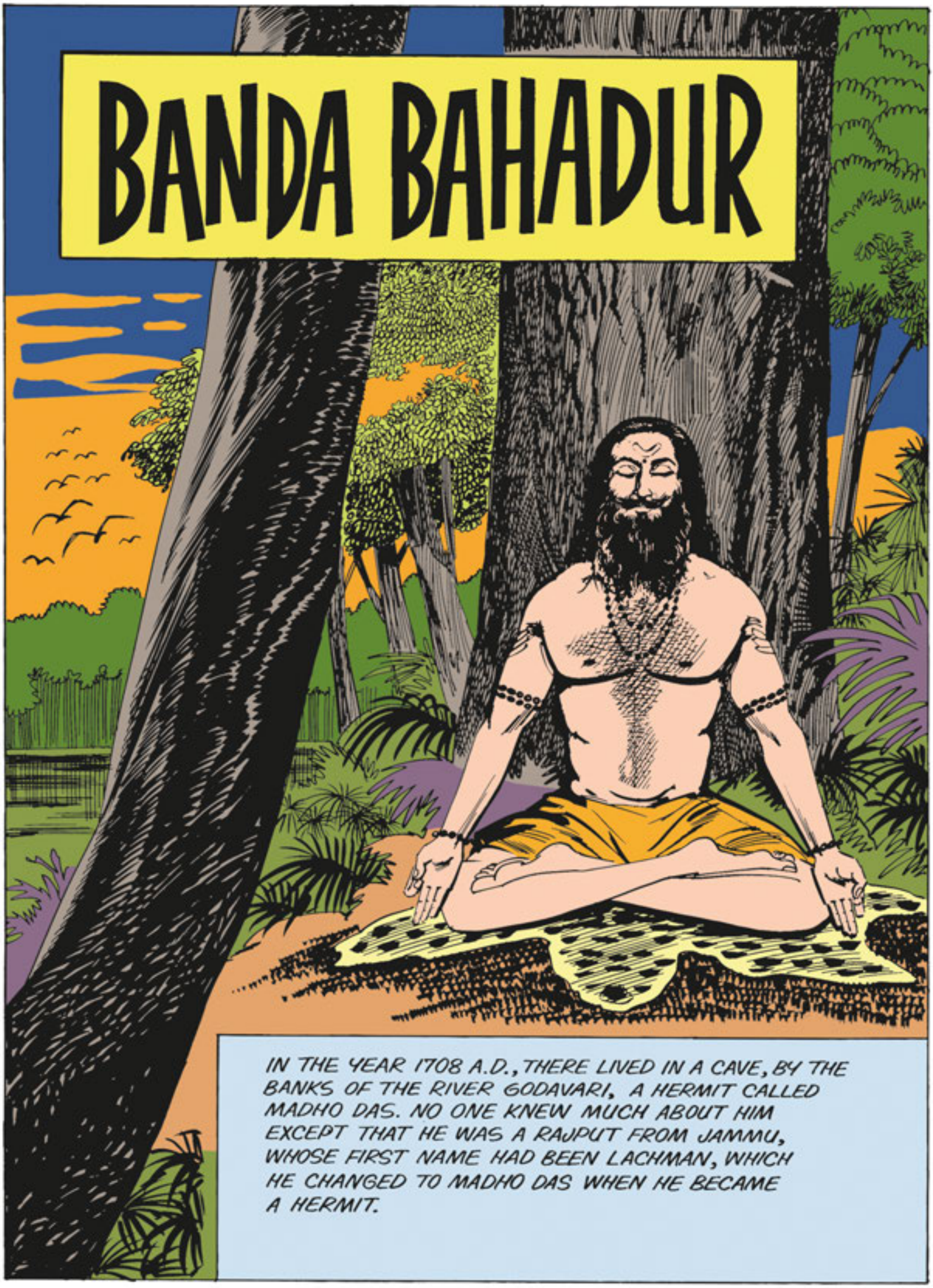
Visionaries
Inspiring tales of thinkers, social reformers and nation builders

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Amar Chitra Katha Pvt Ltd
© Amar Chitra Katha Pvt Ltd, 1973, Reprinted January 2012,
ISBN 978-81-8482-044-7
Published & Printed by Amar Chitra Katha Pvt. Ltd., The Forum, 3rd Floor,
Raghuvanshi Mill Compound, S.B.Marg, Lower Parel (W), Mumbai- 400 013. India
For Consumer Complaints Contact Tel : +91-22-6629 6999
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BANDA BAHADUR
IN THE YEAR 1708 A.D., THERE LIVED IN A CAVE, BY THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GODAVARI, A HERMIT CALLED MADHO DAS. NO ONE KNEW MUCH ABOUT HIM EXCEPT THAT HE WAS A RAJPUT FROM JAMMU, WHOSE FIRST NAME HAD BEEN LACHMAN, WHICH HE CHANGED TO MADHO DAS WHEN HE BECAME A HERMIT.


ONE DAY A STRANGER CAME TO THE BANKS OF THE GODAVARI.
CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE THE HERMIT WHO HEALS, LIVES? MY CHILD IS ALMOST DYING.
DO YOU MEAN MADHO DAS BAIRAGI? THERE IN THAT CAVE.
DO NOT FEAR. YOUR SON SHALL LIVE TO CARE FOR YOU IN YOUR OLD AGE.
AS SOON AS THE MAN AND HIS CHILD NEARED THE BAIRAGI A NEW STRENGTH ENTERED THE CHILD'S BODY.


MADHO DAS BAIRAGI THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF YOGA HAD ACQUIRED MIRACULOUS POWERS.
BABAJI, SAVE MY HUSBAND.
BABA, I AM MARRIED SEVEN YEARS BUT I DON'T HAVE A CHILD.
GO IN PEACE, WOMAN. THE LORD SHALL SOON BLESS YOU WITH ONE.
BABA! THERE HAS BEEN NO RAIN. OUR CROPS ARE WITHERING. THERE WILL BE A FAMINE.


MADHO DAS COULD EVEN CONTROL THE ELEMENTS, SO GREAT WERE HIS MIRACULOUS POWERS.
DO NOT FEAR, DEAR FARMERS. YOU SHALL SOON HAVE RAIN.
THE FIELDS WERE GREEN ONCE MORE AND THE FARMERS REJOICED.
BABAJI KI JAI!
BABAJI KI JAI!
BABAJI KI JAI!


ONE DAY WHEN MADHO DAS WAS DEEP IN MEDITATION, A VISITOR CAME INTO HIS CAVE.


THE HERMIT WAS IN A RAGE.
HOW DARE YOU DISTURB ME WHEN I AM AT PRAYER? WHO ARE YOU?


THE VISITOR WAITED TILL MADHO DAS HAD CALMED DOWN. THEN—
I AM WHO I AM. YOU KNOW WHO I AM.


IN A FLASH MADHO DAS REALISED THAT THE INTRUDER WAS NONE OTHER THAN GURU GOBIND SINGH OF THE KHALSA.
I AM YOUR SLAVE. FORGIVE ME, O GURU.
RISE, MADHO DAS BAIRAGI. I WANT YOU TO BE THE LEADER OF THE KHALSA WHEN I DIE.
I AM NOT WORTHY OF THE HONOUR. BESIDES I AM A SADHU, A BAIRAGI; LET ME REMAIN YOUR BANDA.
YOU SHALL. YOU WILL NO LONGER BE MADHO DAS BAIRAGI. I NAME YOU BANDA SINGH BAHADUR.

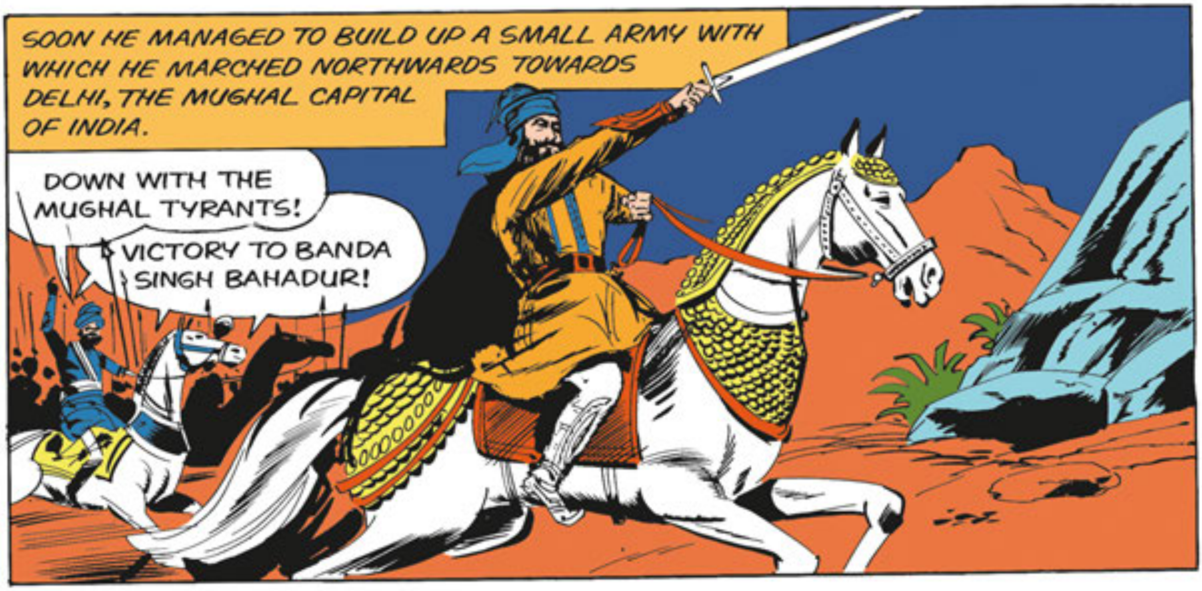

BANDA SINGH BAHADUR, TAKE THESE FIVE ARROWS FROM MY OWN QUIVER, MY SWORD AND MY FLAG.

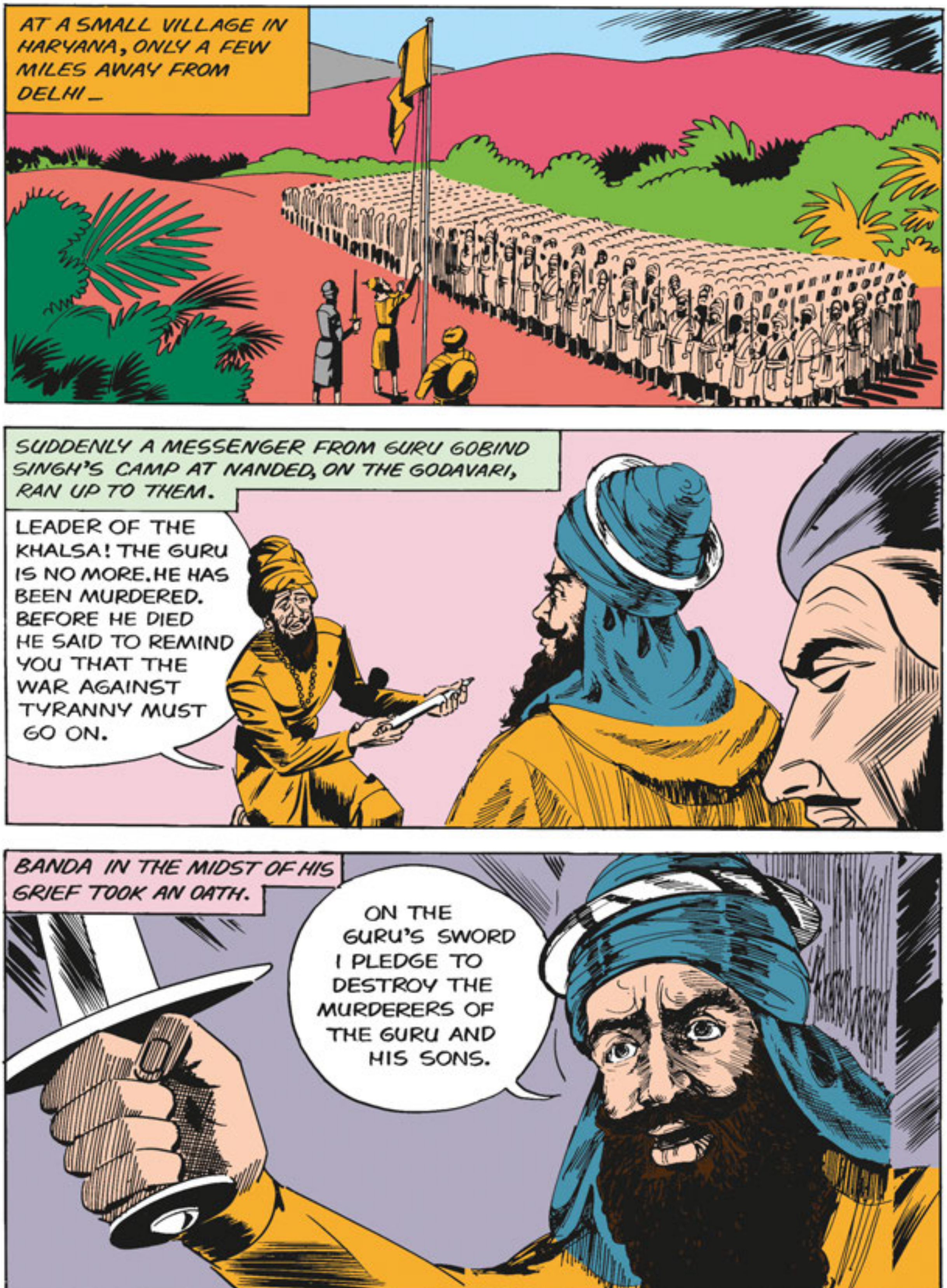

YOU WILL GO TO THE PUNJAB AND ROUSE THE DOWN-TRODDEN PEASANTRY, AGAINST THE MUGHAL TYRANTS.


YOU WILL AVENGE THE MURDERS OF MY SONS. YOU WILL SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF THE GURU ALL OVER INDIA.

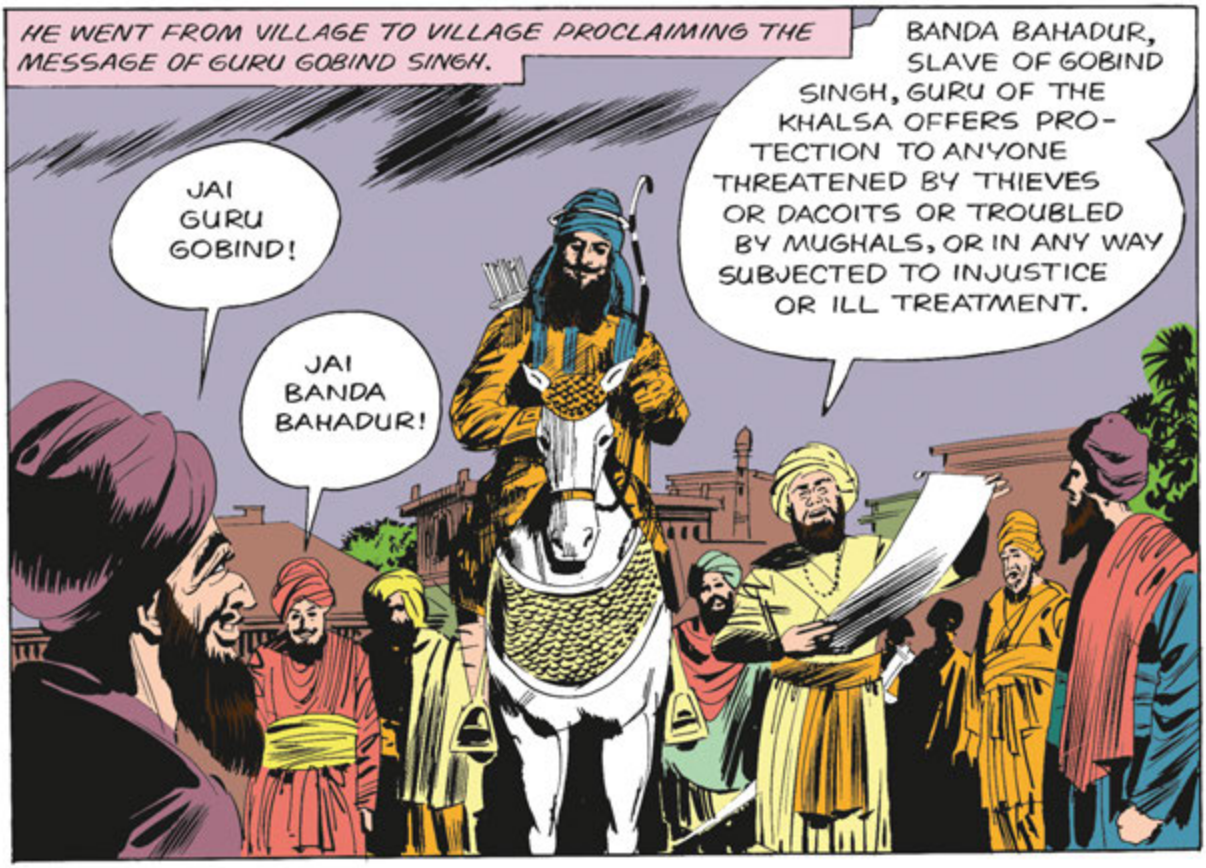

SO THE HERMIT OF THE CAVE WAS CONVERTED INTO A CRUSADER FOR THE KHALSA.
I SHALL FAITHFULLY CARRY OUT THE ORDERS OF MY GURU.

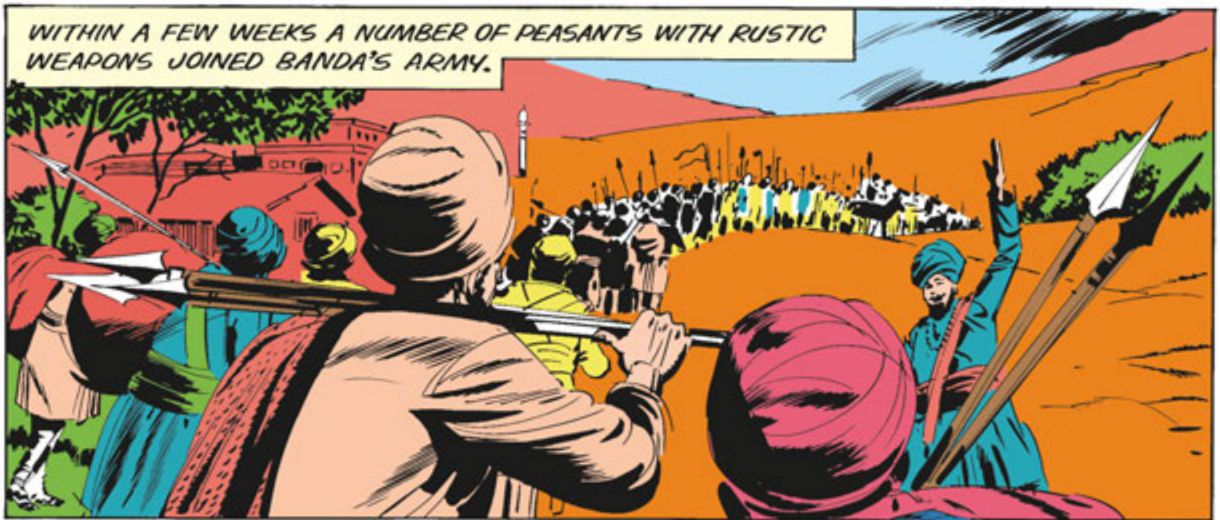

BANDA BEGAN BY TRAINING SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS TO BECOME SOLDIERS.

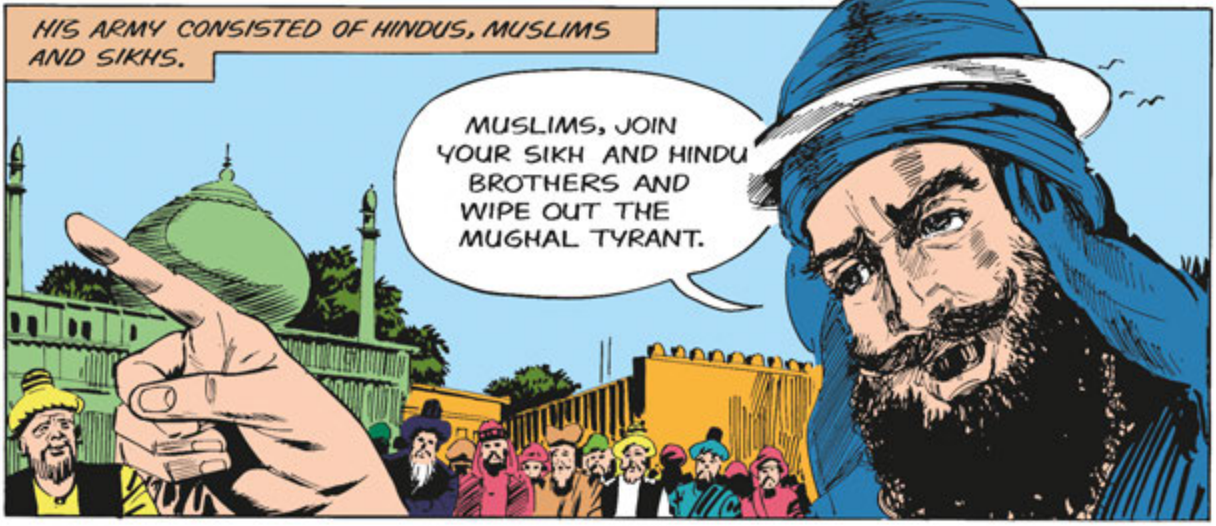

SOON HE MANAGED TO BUILD UP A SMALL ARMY WITH WHICH HE MARCHED NORTHWARDS TOWARDS DELHI, THE MUGHAL CAPITAL OF INDIA.
DOWN WITH THE MUGHAL TYRANTS!
VICTORY TO BANDA SINGH BAHADUR!


AT A SMALL VILLAGE IN HARYANA, ONLY A FEW MILES AWAY FROM DELHI –
SUDDENLY A MESSENGER FROM GURU GOBIND SINGH'S CAMP AT NANDED, ON THE GODAVARI, RAN UP TO THEM.
LEADER OF THE KHALSA! THE GURU IS NO MORE. HE HAS BEEN MURDERED. BEFORE HE DIED HE SAID TO REMIND YOU THAT THE WAR AGAINST TYRANNY MUST GO ON.
BANDA IN THE MIDST OF HIS GRIEF TOOK AN OATH.
ON THE GURU'S SWORD I PLEDGE TO DESTROY THE MURDERERS OF THE GURU AND HIS SONS.

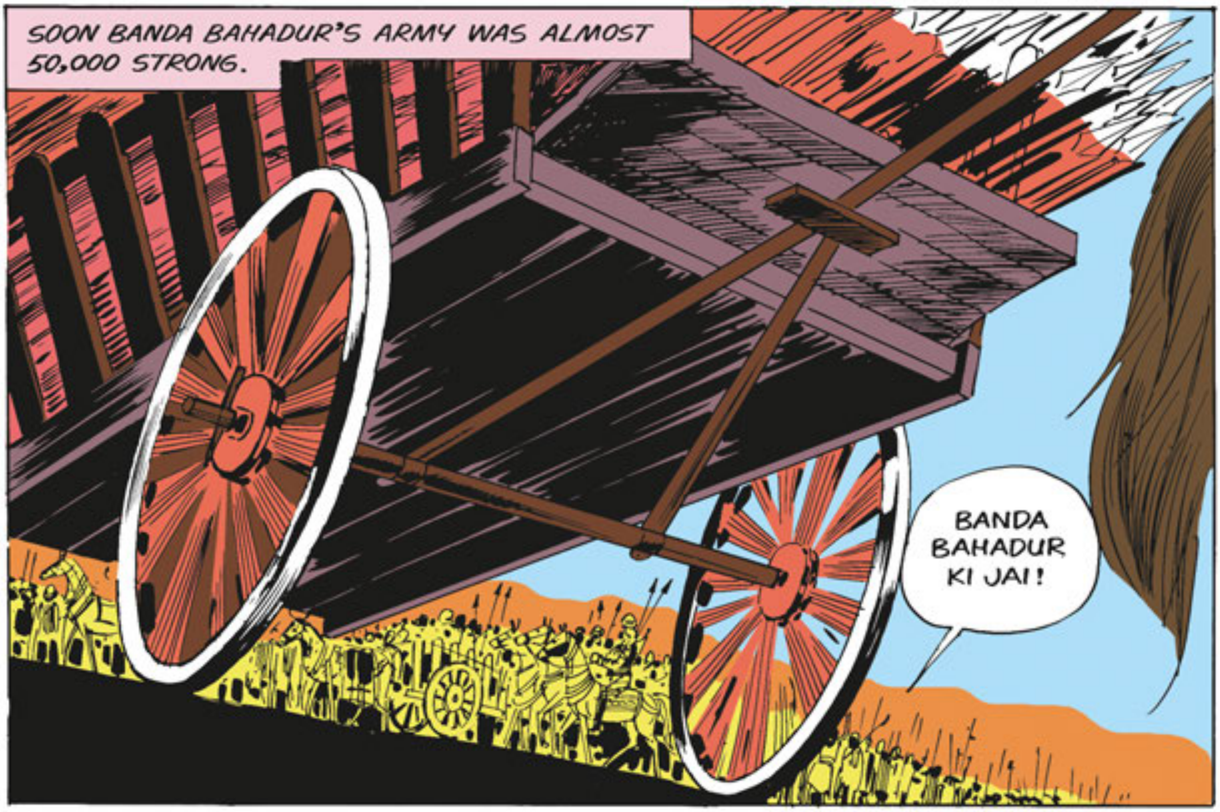

HIS SOLDIERS, AS WELL AS THE CROWD OF ONLOOKERS, ROARED WITH APPROVAL AND BANDA CALLED UPON THEM TO SUPPORT THE CAUSE.
O YE SONS OF THE PUNJAB, IN THE NAME OF THE GREAT GURU RISE AND HELP ME DESTROY THE MUGHAL TYRANTS.
BANDA BAHADUR KI JAI!
BANDA BAHADUR KI JAI!

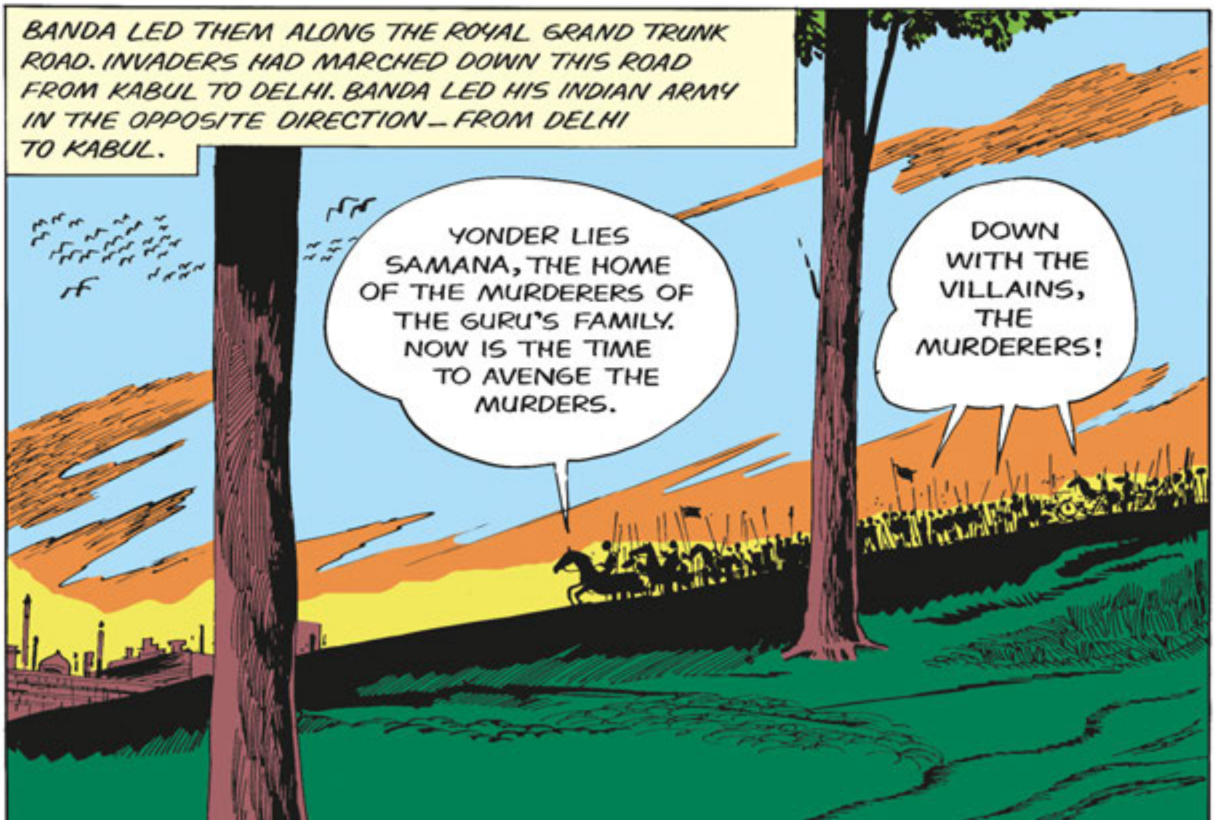

HE WENT FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE OF GURU GOBIND SINGH.
BANDA BAHADUR, SLAVE OF GOBIND SINGH, GURU OF THE KHALSA OFFERS PRO-TECTION TO ANYONE THREATENED BY THIEVES OR DACOITS OR TROUBLED BY MUGHALS, OR IN ANY WAY SUBJECTED TO INJUSTICE OR ILL TREATMENT.
JAI GURU GOBIND!
JAI BANDA BAHADUR!


WITHIN A FEW WEEKS A NUMBER OF PEASANTS WITH RUSTIC WEAPONS JOINED BANDA'S ARMY.


HIS ARMY CONSISTED OF HINDUS, MUSLIMS AND SIKHS.
MUSLIMS, JOIN YOUR SIKH AND HINDU BROTHERS AND WIPE OUT THE MUGHAL TYRANT.


HE CONTINUED TO PERFORM MIRACLES AS HE ADVANCED.
THE BAIRAGI TOUCHED ME AND ALL MY WOUNDS WERE HEALED.


SOON BANDA BAHADUR'S ARMY WAS ALMOST 50,000 STRONG.
BANDA BAHADUR KI JAI!


BANDA LED THEM ALONG THE ROYAL GRAND TRUNK ROAD. INVADERS HAD MARCHED DOWN THIS ROAD FROM KABUL TO DELHI. BANDA LED HIS INDIAN ARMY IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION – FROM DELHI TO KABUL.
YONDER LIES SAMANA, THE HOME OF THE MURDERERS OF THE GURU'S FAMILY. NOW IS THE TIME TO AVENGE THE MURDERS.
DOWN WITH THE VILLAINS, THE MURDERERS!

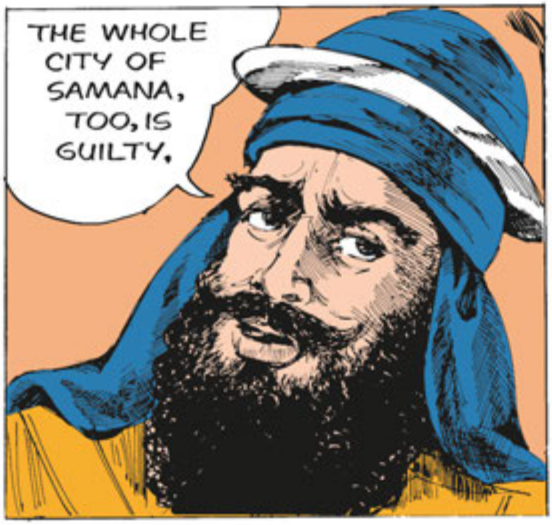

BANDA DREW THE SWORD GURU GOBIND HAD GIVEN HIM AND LED THE ASSAULT ON SAMANA.
THE MUGHALS OF SAMANA RAINED CANNON FIRE ON BANDA'S MEN. BUT A FEW OF THEM MANAGED TO SCALE THE WALLS.
ONCE INSIDE THE CITY THEY FOUGHT THEIR WAY TO THE CITY GATE AND...
...THREW IT OPEN.


THE SIKH CAVALRY THEN CHARGED IN, LED BY BANDA BAHADUR.


SAMANA WAS TAKEN AND THE PERSECUTORS OF THE GURU'S FAMILY WERE CAPTURED.


BANDA THEN TURNED TO HIS MEN.
YOU SHALL DECIDE THE FATE OF THESE MURDERERS.
THEY MUST DIE.


AND FORTHWITH THE SENTENCE WAS CARRIED OUT.

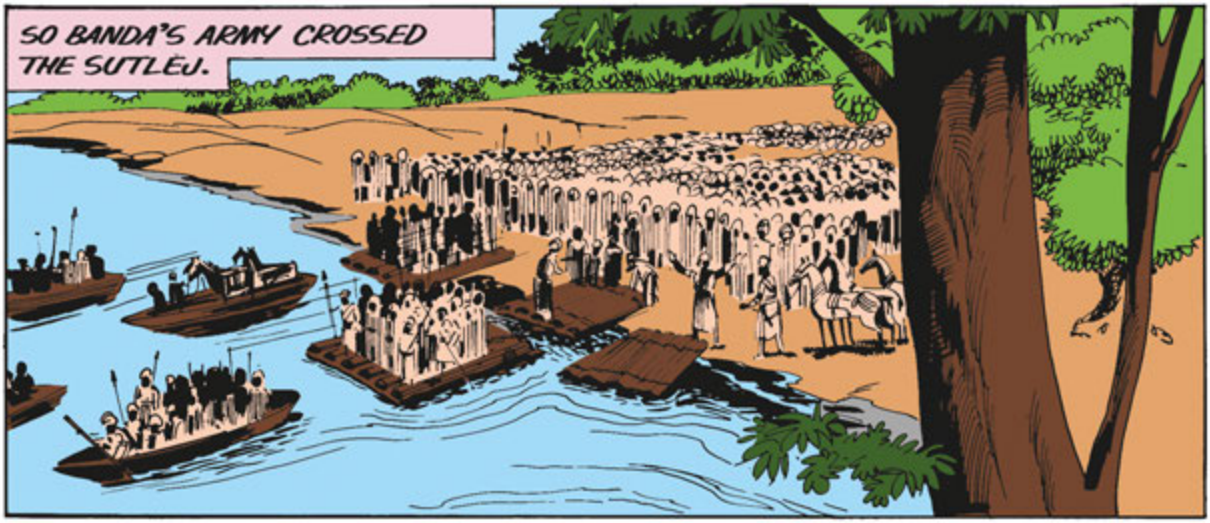

THE WHOLE CITY OF SAMANA, TOO, IS GUILTY.


WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE CITY?
BURN IT!
DESTROY IT!


SO BANDA GAVE THE ORDERS.
THEN GO, MY MEN. DO YOUR DUTY IN THE NAME OF THE KHALSA.


THE CITY OF SAMANA WAS RAZED TO THE GROUND.


WHEN THE TASK WAS OVER BANDA SPOKE TO HIS MEN.
NOW TO SIRHIND! KHALSA SOLDIERS, DO YOU KNOW WHO KILLED THE TWO OTHER SONS OF GURU GOBIND AND ORDERED THE ASSASSI-NATION OF OUR GURU?
DON'T WE KNOW! IT WAS WAZIR KHAN THE GOVERNOR OF SIRHIND! DEATH TO HIM.
LET US NOT TARRY A MOMENT.

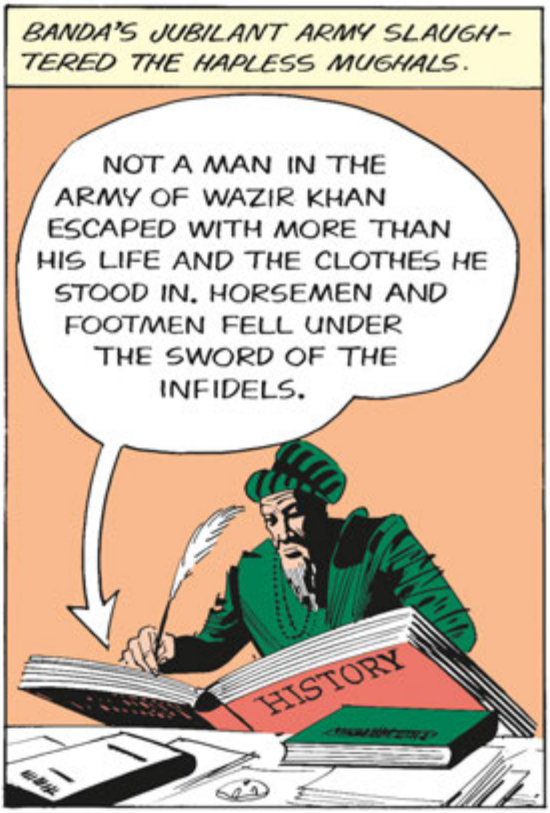

SO BANDA'S ARMY CROSSED THE SUTLEJ.

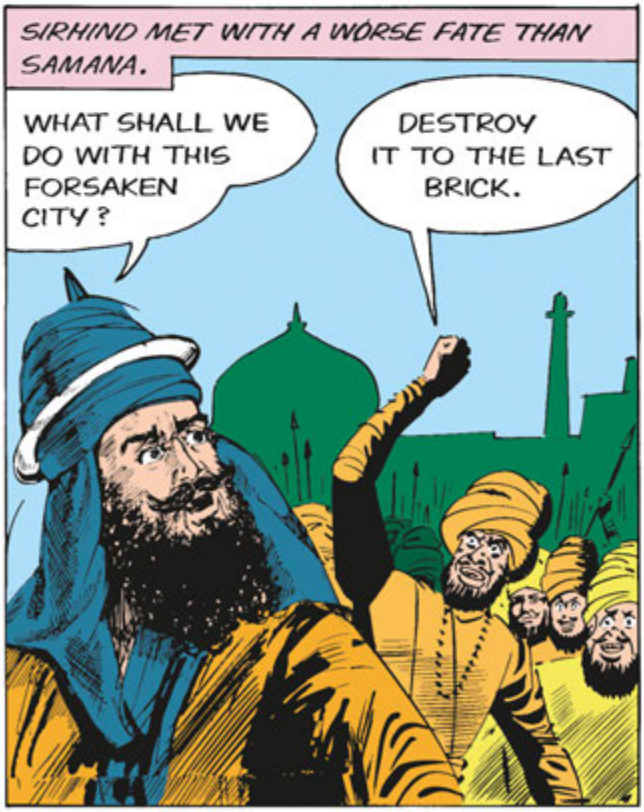

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER, WAZIR KHAN'S ARMY OF AFGHANS, PATHANS AND MUGHALS AWAITED THEM.

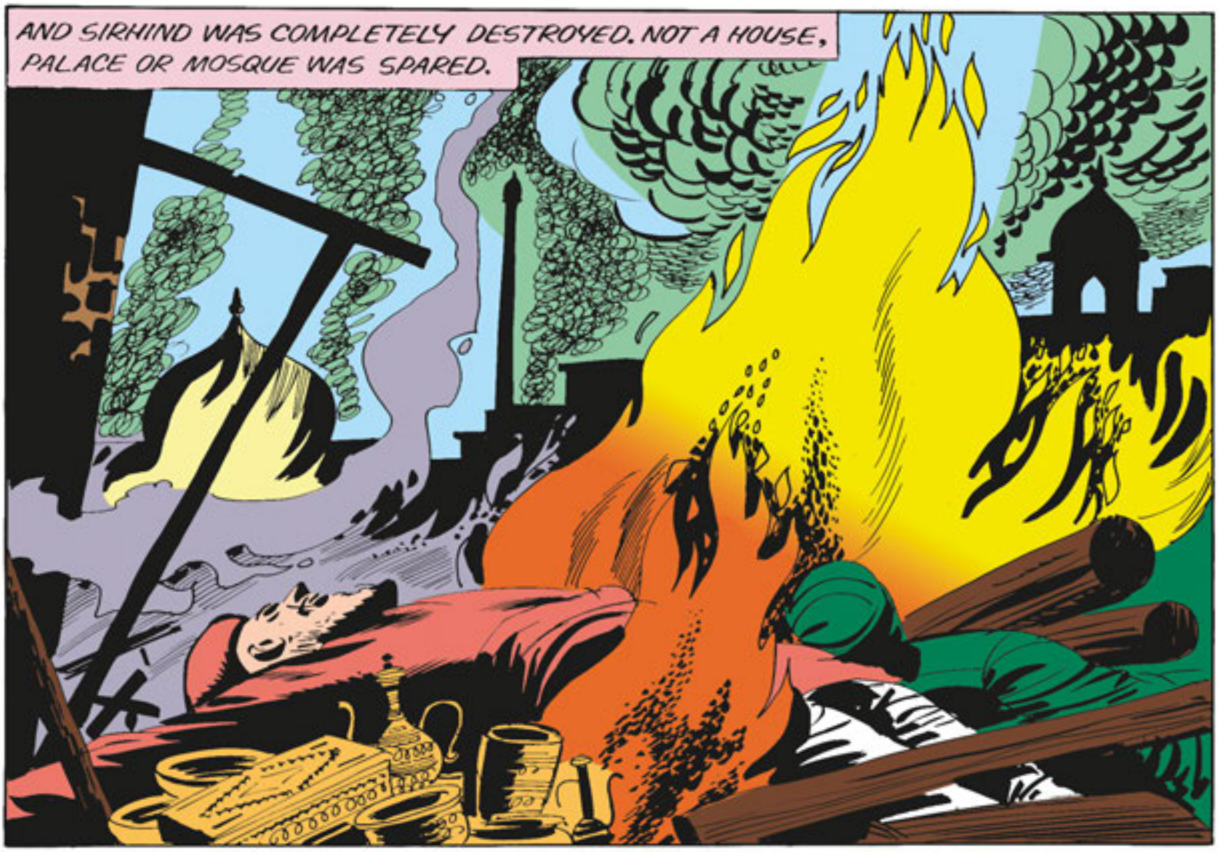

AS BANDA'S MEN FELL INTO BATTLE ARRAY HE ENCOURAGED THEM.
WE ARE UP AGAINST THE MOST POWERFUL ARMY IN INDIA. BUT I HAV FAITH IN MY MEN. FIGHT FOR ALL YOU ARE WORTH. MAY THE GURU GRANT US VICTORY.


AND SO THE BLOODY BATTLE OF SIRHIND WAS FOUGHT ON MAY 24, 1710.


THE VICTORY WAS BANDA'S AND THE MUGHALS FLED IN RETREAT.


BANDA'S JUBILANT ARMY SLAUGHTERED THE HAPLESS MUGHALS.
NOT A MAN IN THE ARMY OF WAZIR KHAN ESCAPED WITH MORE THAN HIS LIFE AND THE CLOTHES HE STOOD IN. HORSEMEN AND FOOTMEN FELL UNDER THE SWORD OF THE INFIDELS.
HISTORY


SIRHIND MET WITH A WORSE FATE THAN SAMANA.
WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THIS FORSAKEN CITY ?
DESTROY IT TO THE LAST BRICK.


AND SIRHIND WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED. NOT A HOUSE, PALACE OR MOSQUE WAS SPARED.


WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER–
THE MUGHAL EMPEROR IS BOUND TO TAKE ACTION. IT WILL BE WISE FOR US TO RETREAT TO THE FOOTHILLS.
SO HE LED HIS ARMY TO MUKHLISGARH WHERE THEY BEGAN BUILDING A FORT.
WHEN THE FORT WAS COMPLETED BANDA WAS CROWNED KING.
BANDA BAHADUR KI JAI!
BANDA BAHADUR KI JAI!

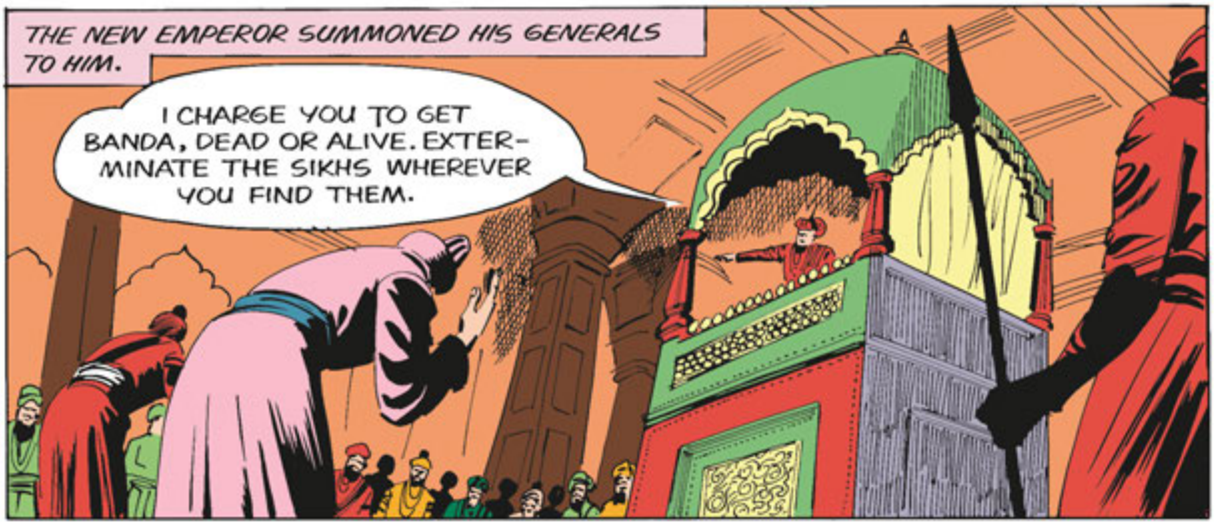

BANDA HAD COINS STRUCK IN THE NAME OF KHALSA COMMONWEALTH WITH THE THREE EMBLEMS OF THE GURU – "DEGH" "TEGH" AND "FATEH." THE "DEGH" FOR THE CAULDRON OF THE GURU'S KITCHEN WHERE FOOD WAS DISTRIBUTED FREE, THE "TEGH" FOR THE SWORD USED AGAINST THE TYRANTS, AND "FATEH" FOR VICTORY.
BUT THIS ACT OF BANDA'S CREATED DISCORD AMONG HIS MEN.
TO STRIKE COINS IS AGAINST THE GURU'S ORDERS!
HE IS ONE OF US. WHY SHOULD HE BE CROWNED KING?
BANDA'S FOLLOWING WAS SOON DIVIDED. THOSE WHO REMAINED LOYAL TO HIM WERE THE BANDAI KHALSA.
THOSE WHO DESERTED HIM WERE THE TAT KHALSA.
IN THE MEANWHILE, AT DELHI, BAHADUR SHAH THE MUGHAL KING WAS UPSET TO HEAR OF THE FATE OF SAMANA AND SIRHIND.
WE SHALL WAGE A HOLY WAR AGAINST BANDA AND THE SIKHS.
DEATH TO BANDA!
BADSHAH SALAMAT ZINDABAD.


BAHADUR SHAH APPOINTED HIS ABLEST COMMANDER FEROZE KHAN TO LEAD THE EXPEDITION AGAINST BANDA.
GET THAT SCOUNDREL DEAD OR ALIVE. GOD BE WITH YOU.
FEROZE KHAN ARRIVED AT MUKHLISGARH AND SURROUNDED THE FORT.
FEROZE KHAN THEN GAVE HIS ORDERS.
LET NO ONE GET OUT OF THE FORT. WE'LL STARVE THEM TO DEATH OR INTO SURRENDER.
INSIDE MUKHLISGARH—
OUR SOLDIERS HAVE NOT EATEN FOR MANY DAYS. THEY HAVE BECOME WEAK.
COME WHAT MAY. WE SHALL NEVER SURRENDER.
SUDDENLY ONE OF THE OFFICERS, GULAB SINGH, HAD AN IDEA.
I HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH THE SAME APPEARANCE AS YOU. LET ME HAVE THE HONOUR OF LAYING DOWN MY LIFE FOR YOU.
BUT— HOW— I DON'T UNDERSTAND.


I WILL WEAR YOUR ARMOUR AND CHALLENGE THE MUGHALS FROM THE WALLS OVER THE FRONT GATE. THEY WILL NATURALLY RUSH TO-WARDS ME AND LEAVE THE REAR GATE UNGUARDED AND YOU CAN MAKE YOUR ESCAPE.
ALL THE OFFICERS COMMENDED HIM HIGHLY AND BANDA WAS TOUCHED BY HIS OFFER.
AN EXCELLENT PLAN!
A TRULY NOBLE SOUL.
MAY THE GURU BLESS YOU.
SO THE TWO CHANGED CLOTHES.
THEN GULAB SINGH, DRESSED AS BANDA, SHOWED HIMSELF ON THE WALLS OF THE FORT.
COME, MUGHALS, COME! WE'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO FIGHT.


THE FRONT GATES WERE THEN THROWN OPEN. AS FORESEEN, THE MUGHALS RUSHED IN FORGETTING TO GUARD THE REAR GATE.
MEANWHILE BANDA AND A BAND OF HIS SOLDIERS MADE GOOD THEIR ESCAPE.
MUKHLISGARH FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE MUGHALS AND THEY KILLED AS MANY SIKHS AS THEY COULD.
WHERE IS BANDA? TAKE HIM ALIVE. THE EMPEROR WOULD LOVE TO SEE HIS HEAD ROLL OFF.
THERE HE IS!
A RING OF MUGHAL SOLDIERS CLOSED IN AROUND A MAN SEATED ON A STONE.
THAT'S HIM. GET THE BEARDED CUR ALIVE.

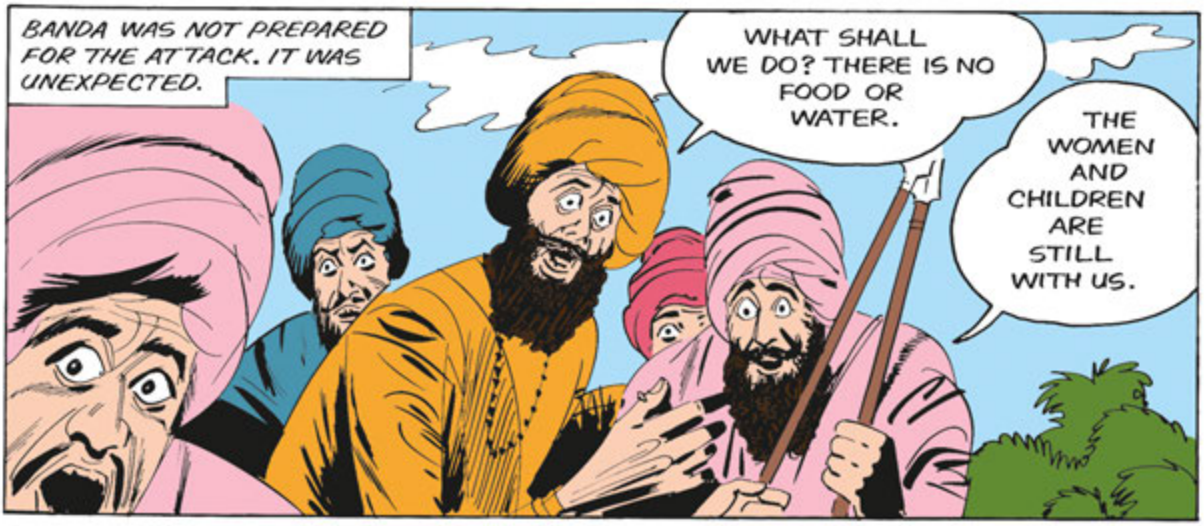

GENERAL GULAB SINGH GAVE HIMSELF UP.
THE MAN YOU WANT HAS ESCAPED. I AM GULAB SINGH, A HUMBLE ORDERLY.
PUT HIM IN IRONS. WE'LL TAKE HIM TO THE EMPEROR.
GULAB SINGH WAS BROUGHT IN CHAINS TO THE EMPEROR.
ALAS! SIR. THE HAWK HAS FLOWN AND WE HAVE TRAPPED AN OWL INSTEAD.
WHEN THE EMPEROR HEARD THAT HE WAS FURIOUS.
CUT OFF THE HEAD OF THIS BLACK-FACED, BEARDED CUR. AND GET ME BANDA OR I'LL CUT OFF YOUR HEAD AS WELL.
SOON BAHADUR SHAH DIED AND HIS NEPHEW FARRUKH SIYAR BECAME EMPEROR.


THE NEW EMPEROR SUMMONED HIS GENERALS TO HIM.
I CHARGE YOU TO GET BANDA, DEAD OR ALIVE. EXTERMINATE THE SIKHS WHEREVER YOU FIND THEM.


MEANWHILE BANDA'S FOLLOWING OF BANDAI KHALSA BECAME RESTLESS.
OUR GURU SEEMS TO THINK THAT AFTER AVENGING THE MURDERS OF GURU GOBIND SINGH'S FAMILY HIS TASK HAS ENDED. WHAT ABOUT THE TYRANNY OF THE MUGHALS THAT CONTINUES.


BANDA INSTEAD OF CONTINUING THE WAR AGAINST THE TYRANTS AFTER HIS ESCAPE, HAD ALLOWED HIMSELF TO GET CAUGHT IN THE MESHES OF A HOUSEHOLDER'S LIFE. HE MARRIED TWO WIVES AND HAD MANY CHILDREN.

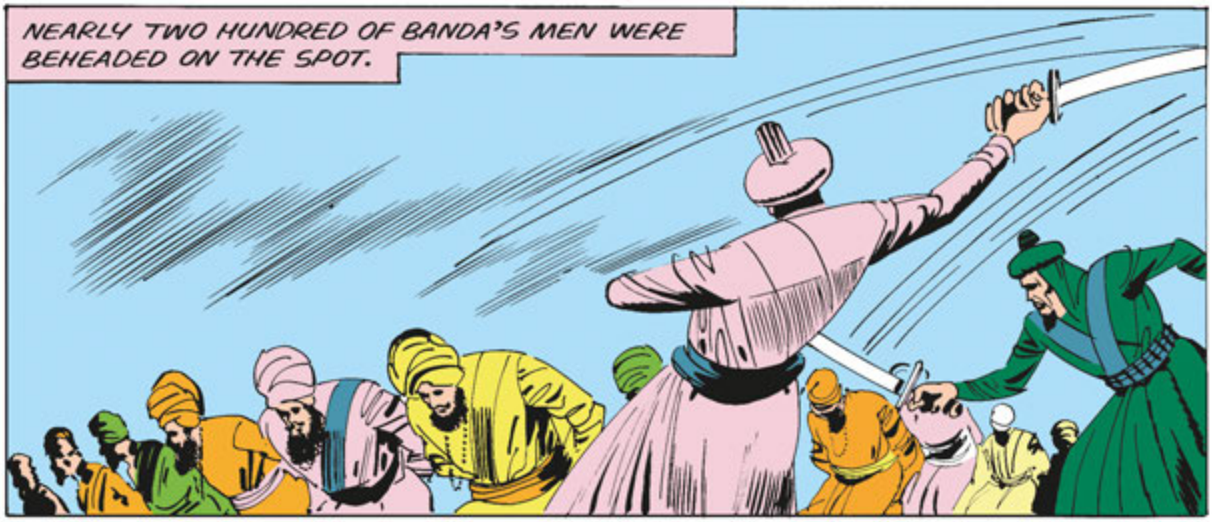

FARRUKH SIYAR'S GENERALS SURROUNDED BANDA'S CAMP NEAR GURDASPUR.


BANDA WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THE ATTACK. IT WAS UNEXPECTED.
WHAT SHALL WE DO? THERE IS NO FOOD OR WATER.
THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE STILL WITH US.

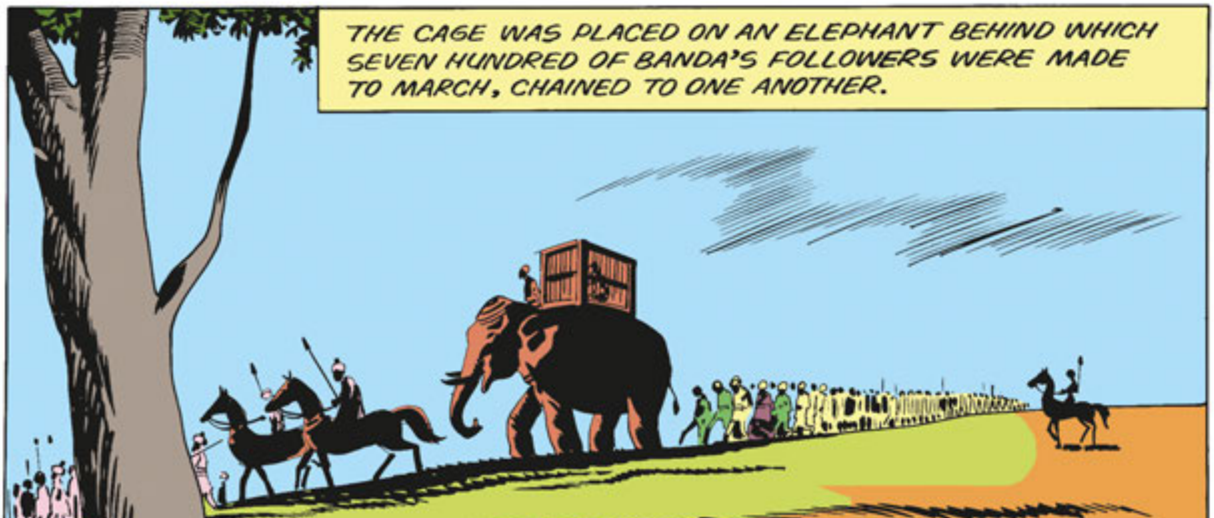

IN SPITE OF THE ODDS AGAINST HIM BANDA HELD OUT FOR EIGHT LONG MONTHS. IN ORDER TO SURVIVE THEY WERE FORCED TO EAT THE FLESH OF THEIR OXEN.
I'D RATHER DIE THAN EAT BEEF.
WE MAY REFUSE. BUT WHAT WILL THE CHILDREN DO? I WILL NOT LET MINE DIE.

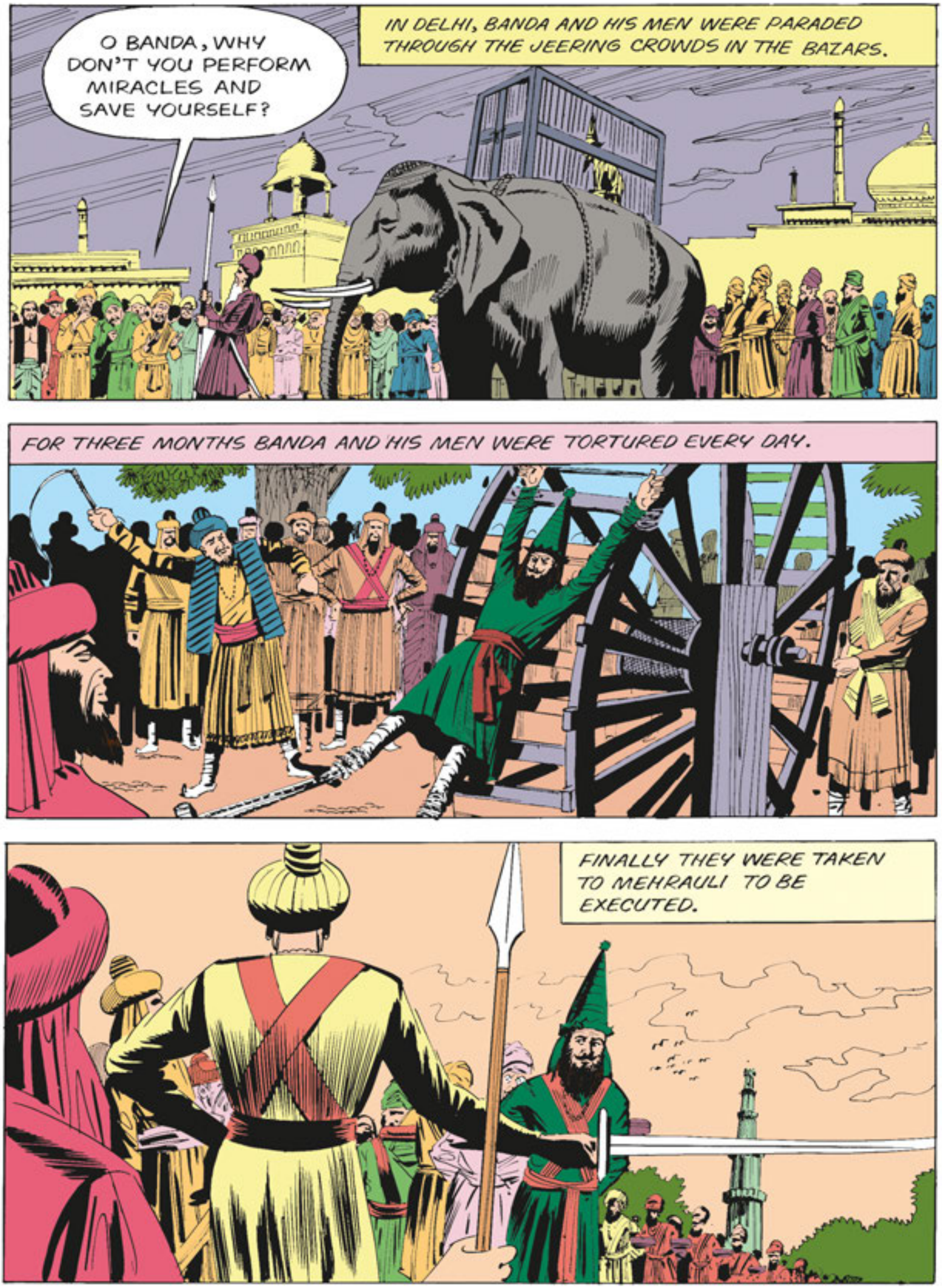


AT LAST THE MUGHALS RESORTED TO ONE OF THEIR WELL-TRIED RUSES. A MESSENGER WAS SENT TO BANDA'S CAMP.
IF YOU SURRENDER, THE EMPEROR PROMISES TO SPARE YOUR LIFE AND THAT OF YOUR FOLLOWERS.
BANDA DID NOT WANT TO SURRENDER.
WE AGREE. IT WOULD BE A NOBLE DEATH EVEN IF WE DID DIE FIGHTING.
WE CANNOT FIGHT. WE ARE WEAK WITH HUNGER. LET'S SURRENDER.
BANDA, WEARY BY NOW OF THE DIS-SENSIONS IN HIS CAMP, GAVE IN TO THE MAJORITY.
WE AGREE TO LAY DOWN OUR ARMS ON THE PRO-MISE THAT OUR LIVES WILL BE SPARED.
I SWEAR BY THE HOLY BOOK. YOUR LIVES SHALL BE SPARED.
THE MUGHALS HOWEVER HAD NO INTENTION OF HONOURING THEIR WORD.


NEARLY TWO HUNDRED OF BANDA'S MEN WERE BEHEADED ON THE SPOT.


BANDA WAS PUSHED INTO AN IRON CAGE, TO BE TAKEN TO DELHI.


THE CAGE WAS PLACED ON AN ELEPHANT BEHIND WHICH SEVEN HUNDRED OF BANDA'S FOLLOWERS WERE MADE TO MARCH, CHAINED TO ONE ANOTHER.


IN DELHI, BANDA AND HIS MEN WERE PARADED THROUGH THE JEERING CROWDS IN THE BAZARS.
O BANDA, WHY DON'T YOU PERFORM MIRACLES AND SAVE YOURSELF?
FOR THREE MONTHS BANDA AND HIS MEN WERE TORTURED EVERY DAY.
FINALLY THEY WERE TAKEN TO MEHRAULI TO BE EXECUTED.


BANDA'S FOUR-YEAR-OLD SON WAS BROUGHT BEFORE HIS FATHER.
IF YOU RENOUNCE YOUR FAITH YOUR SON'S LIFE WILL BE SPARED.
BUT BANDA ONLY SMILED AND BLESSED HIS SON.
MY SON GO TO YOUR GURU LIKE A BRAVE SIKH.
BANDA'S SON AND SIX HUNDRED OF HIS FOLLOWERS WERE EXECUTED.
ON SUNDAY, JUNE 19, 1716 CAME BANDA'S TURN.
YOU HAVE A LAST CHANCE. RENOUNCE YOUR GURU AND SAVE YOUR LIFE.
NEVER! I DESERVE THIS FOR STRAYING FROM THE GURU'S PATH.


THE EXECUTIONER TAUNTED HIM.
OR WOULD YOU RATHER USE YOUR MIRACULOUS POWERS AND SAVE YOUR LIFE?

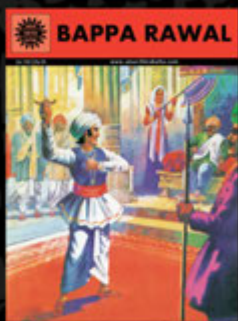

BUT BANDA HARDLY HEARD THE TAUNTS FOR HIS MIND WAS FIRMLY IMPLANTED ON THE GURU.
MY GURU, FORGIVE ME FOR MY LAPSE, AND FOR FORGETTING MY DUTIES. ALL I WANT NOW IS TO REST ON YOUR LOTUS FEET.
SO DIED BANDA BAHADUR, HERMIT, SOLDIER, KING AND MARTYR.

BANDA BAHADUR

Inspired by Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur led the Sikh rebellion against the Mughal Empire. For eight years, he ravaged the whole of North India. The havoc he created in the Indo-Gangetic plain was of such magnitude that the Mughals could never restore their administration. Invasions by the Persian tyrant Nadir Shah and the Afghan Ahmed Shah Abdali hastened the decline of the once mighty empire which helped the Sikhs to emerge as the rulers of Punjab. Banda Bahadur thus paved the way for the foundation of the Sikh Kingdom.

OTHER ACK BRAVEHEARTS:

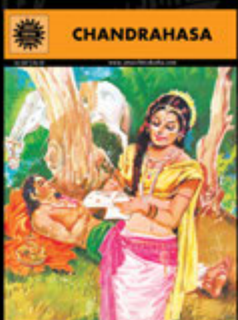




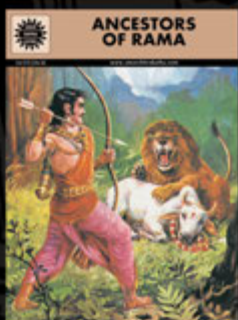




ALSO LOOK FOR:



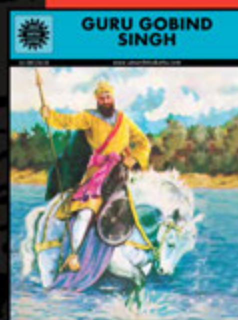
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\- NARAYAN MURTHY, CHIEF MENTOR, INFOSYS